

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7690

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T AMMAN 2228

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON FROM PICKERING

E.O.11652 GDS

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, JO, SA, UR

SUBJECT: JORDAN AIR DEFENSE - FUNDING

REF: (A) JIDDA 3008 (REPEATED AS STATE 100537, (B) STATE 100616

1. IN ACCORD WITH INSTRUCTION S REFTEL (B), I HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH RIFAI. KING IS IN AQABA AND OPEN TELEPHONE LINE IS IN MY JUDGEMENT SUBJECT TO MONITORING.

2. I HAVE POINTED OUT TO RIFAI THAT MISUNDERSTANDING SEEMS TO HAVE ARISEN OVER EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE WHICH HE DESCRIBED FOR ME TODAY (AMMAN 2224 AND AMMAN 2225). I DESCRIBED FOR HIM NATURE OF PROBLEM. HE SAID HE COULD SEE WHY SAUDI HAD INTERPRETED WHAT JORDANIANS HAD SAID THE SAY THEY DID. FACT WAS THAT KING'S LETTER MADE CLEAR THAT NOTHING WAS OFF UNTIL AFTER CONTRACTS RUN OUT AT END OF THE MONTH. HE SAID THAT I COULD REPEAT AGAIN TO WASHINGTON FOR USE WITH SAUDIS WHAT KING HAD AUTHORIZED US TO SAY ON HIS BEHALF - THAT SUBJECT TO CONDITION THAT SYSTEM ADEQUATE AND FUNDING QUESTION SETTLED SOON - THEY ARE VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN PURCHASING US SYSTEM WITH SAUDI FUNDING. RIFAI ADDED CAVEAT THAT JORDANIANS WANT TO GET FULL SYSTEM (PHASE TWO PROBLEM), BUT AGAIN REAFFIRMED THEY ARE OPEN TO LOOK AT WHAT EVER WE CAN WORK OUT.

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3. I RAISED POINT ABOUT (A) CROWN PRINCE (WHO LEFT HERE THIS

MORNING AND IS IN RIYADH TONIGHT) BEING SENT A MESSAGE ALSO TO REAFFIRM THIS TO SAUDIS AND (B) SENDING SAUDIS ANOTHER MESSAGE. RIFAI SAID ANOTHER MESSAGE FROM THE KING IS NOT POSSIBLE. (I AM INCLINED TO AGREE STRONGLY WITH HIM GIVEN THE HASH THAT HAS APPARENTLY BEEN MADE WITH SAUDI-JORDAN COMMUNICATIONS THUS FAR). HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT WHILE HASSAN IS NOT TO BRING UP SUBJECT, HE IS FULLY BRIEFED ON JORDANIAN POSITION WHICH RIFAI OUTLINED TO ME IN PARA 2.

4. MY SUGGESTION WOULD BE THAT YOU AUTHORIZE AMBASSADOR PORTER TO REPORT MY CONVERSATION. IN THE MEANTIME, WE EXPECT KING BACK HERE TOMORROW. I WILL TRY TO SEE HIM IN ORDER FURTHER TO REINFORCE THE POSITION, KNOWING WITH WHAT PLEASURE SAUDIS WILL RECEIVE ANYTHING WITH RIFAI'S NAME ATTACHED.

5. COMMENT: YOU WILL UNDERSTAND FROM OUR EXCHANGE THAT I HAVE NOT TALKED WITH JORDANIANS ABOUT APPROACH WHICH WE HAVE IN

MIND ALTHOUGH PRESS HERE HAS BEEN FULL OF IT. AS A RESULT JORDANIANS ARE LIKELY TO BE HARD ON THEIR NEED FOR ASSURANCE ON FULL FUNDING, AND SAUDIS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THIS. NEVERTHELESS, RIFAI HAS BEEN CLEAR AND CATEGORICAL WITH ME TODAY BOTH ON WANTING TO BUY US AND HOPE THAT SOMETHING CAN BE WORKED OUT, AS WELL AS WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER WHATEVER WE CAN WORK OUT WITH SAUDIS GIVEN CAVEATS PASSED ON TO ME BY KING AND BY HIM. AS EARLIER TELEGRAMS INDICATE, WE TOO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT PROBLEM OF TIME AND FACT THAT CURRENT SAUDI- JORDANIAN CONTRETEMPS HAS SERVED TO WASTE SOME MORE OF IT. INCIDENTALLY, RIFAI MENTIONED THAT MUDHAR BADRAN, COURT MINISTER, IS WITH HASSAN IN RIYADH, AND THAT HE IS BRIEFED (AN MADE ONE PREVIOUS VISIT TO DISCUSS HAWK SITUATION WITH FAHD). MY IMPRESSION IS ALSO FROM UNILATERAL SOURCES THAT HE IS FAVORABLE TO WORKING SOMETHING OUT WITH THE SAUDIS AND US ON AIR DEFENSE AS IS CROWN PRINCE. PICKERING

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